

## EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

COLLECTIONS GIVEN TO THE LIBRARY, 1957-1965

GERTRUDE L. ANNAN

Librarian, The New York Academy of Medicine

RECENT years have brought to the Library remarkable and valuable collections. That one organization should in this short time attract such varied material is a tribute to the Academy's position in the community. Each year through the Friends of the Rare Book Room and from other benefactors, funds have been furnished that have made possible the acquisition of books and manuscripts of distinction, and the minutes of the Library Committee show a long record of individual volumes, gifts from the splendid libraries of such collectors as Dr. Alfred M. Hellman, Dr. Reginald Burbank, Dr. Claude E. Heaton. In addition there have come collections of size, substance, and variety that have been carefully brought together with knowledge, skill, and affection. They deserve special acknowledgment to a wide audience.

### THE MORTIMER AND ANNA NEINKEN COLLECTION

In 1957 Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Neinken unexpectedly presented an extraordinary group of Italian public health broadsides. Nearly two thousand official proclamations emanating from Italian cities date from the 16th to the early 19th centuries. Often handsomely embellished with the seals of the sponsoring cities, these "bandos" provide an unusual source of information about the measures taken to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. This fascinating group of documents is supplemented by a number of Spanish, French, and Italian books, pamphlets, and broadsides given by the Neinkens each year since 1957. The *Academy Bookman* describes these contributions. A recent exhibit showed items from the Neinken collection and emphasized the complementary nature of the material. One of the manifestoes related to an epidemic in the province of Bari, Italy, in 1691. By its side was a work by Filippo Arieta, Naples, 1694, a detailed history of the "*contaggio occorso nella provincia di Bari negli anni 1690, 1691 e 1692.*" The book

was open to show a folding map of the province with a double sanitary cordon of tents with banners flying and with ships patrolling the shore. The inner cordon surrounds the badly affected areas. Among recent additions to the collection are handwritten documents of the French republic issued in 1794 by the Commission de Santé of the Service de Santé Militaire, and the Comité de Salut Public. Another is a particularly handsome broadside bill of health granted a French ship in a Spanish port in 1790, with woodcuts of three protecting saints and having a decorative border.

#### THE LEVY COLLECTION

In April 1960 came a deed of gift to the Library of the Academy's president, Dr. Robert L. Levy. Bookmen throughout the world would examine this small but exciting collection with awe. Dr. Levy, as a cardiologist, chose with care the most important contributions to his subject, and contributions in his field were written by those whose names are especially glamorous to collectors. No texts are more sought after than those of William Harvey. Dr. Levy can boast of an unusually splendid copy of the first edition of *De motu cordis*, 1628, with the errata that are lacking from the Academy's present copy. Among 35 other editions of Harvey's writings are early Latin editions, with the 1653 and 1673 English, of the *De motu cordis*, and the early editions of *De generatione animalium*, including the English of 1653. Auenbrugger, Bouillaud, Corvisart, Fabricius ab Aquapendente, Floyer, Heberden, Laennec, Lancisi, Lower, Riolan, de Senac, Skoda, Spigelius, Withering, and others are here in excellent copies of desirable editions. This distinguished library is surely a treasure to be cherished.

#### THE BEEKMAN COLLECTION

Each collection represents the interests of the original owner. Dr. Fenwick Beekman's major enthusiasm was John Hunter, the 18th-century English anatomist. Dr. Beekman's extensive library contains editions of Hunter's many works, books by his contemporaries, books and articles about Hunter and his associates, and memorabilia that must have taken many years of patient searching to assemble. The Hunterian collection and the rest of Dr. Beekman's library came to us in three lots, in the years 1960 to 1962.

Hunter's own contributions are abundantly present—eight editions of

his work on blood, thirteen on venereal diseases, five on the teeth, two of the collected works in English, one in French, one in German; two on the animal economy, and one each on geology and natural history. In a *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales* there is a description by Hunter of specimens brought back to England. There are cuttings of many articles from the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society, and complete volumes of medical journals containing his writings. Four autograph letters and a student's manuscript of his lectures are among the memorabilia that contain such fascinating bits as an autopsy report signed by Hunter, a rubbing taken from his coffin plate, a ticket to the ceremony of his reinterment at Westminster Abbey, and an announcement of a sale at Christie's of his property after his death in 1794. A petition made by Matthew Baillie and Everard Home asked that Parliament acquire Hunter's collection of anatomical specimens. Fourteen anatomists and physicians were questioned about the nature of the collection, the object of the collection, the length of time it could be preserved, and the annual expense required to maintain it. Their answers show Hunter's stature in the opinion of his colleagues. Sir George Baker, president of the College of Physicians, assessed the collection as "very expensive," and added, "it is well known that Mr. Hunter never regarded money when in pursuit of his favourite object; but the question is not what it cost, but what it is?—It is the produce of great ingenuity, unexampled labour, and perseverance for forty years, or nearly, of a man's life; and it can tend to the improvement of medicine, by that consideration it acquires intrinsic value. . . ."

Dr. Beekman's interest ranged beyond John Hunter and his times. He had fine copies of many important writers—William Cowper, William Cheselden, Percivall Pott, Edward Jenner, Richard Wiseman. Charles Darwin and Joseph Lister are particularly well represented. Mention must be made, too, of his collection on body snatching. One volume alone of this latter collection is a great treasure, for it contains handbills, pamphlets, clippings, illustrations, very unusual ephemera concerning the resurrectionists. Next to an account of the trial of William Burke in Edinburgh, 1829, we find a note in his hand written from prison while awaiting trial. Popular verses and illustrations of both Burke and his accomplice, William Hare, and their victims bring vividly to mind the whole sordid story.

### THE HAYES MARTIN COLLECTION

Health is the concern of every man, and the art of every period reflects his preoccupation with it. Dr. Hayes E. Martin's collection, given to us in 1960, comprises engravings and woodcuts of the 17th to the 20th centuries, showing patients suffering from a variety of ills, and physicians, surgeons, dentists, and charlatans ready to treat them. They illuminate the time and place of their origin, showing interiors, costumes, uniforms, and instruments. Whether caricatures or sentimental prints, they serve to enhance the background of medical history.

### THE MICHAEL DAVIS COLLECTION

Today no subject is more vital to medicine than the economic and social aspects of medical care. Dr. Michael M. Davis, who has devoted fifty years of his life to work in this field, in 1960 gave promise to the Library of the eventual gift of the material he has gathered together over the years. Many of the books may already be in this Library, but the mass of brochures, unpublished reports, and mimeographed documents are of inestimable importance to those concerned with health problems of today or yesterday, and are not known to be available in such a collection here or elsewhere. Dr. Davis in 1910 became a director of the Boston Dispensary and was responsible for the inauguration of pay clinics there. His long experience since that time, his knowledge, and his enthusiasm have stimulated a collection that brings to New York an invaluable reference tool for health economics.

### THE GAMBLE COLLECTION

The year 1961 brought a gift from Mr. Sidney Gamble of about 2,000 medical dissertations, inaugural addresses, and pamphlets of the 17th to the 19th centuries. Most of these ephemeral pieces from the European continent were not previously in the Library, and many came from the pens of men who made important contributions to medical knowledge.

### THE HOEBER COLLECTION

In the two or three decades after World War I no medical publisher was better known to the physicians of Europe and America than Paul B. Hoeber of New York. Evidence of respect and affection from

leading medical authors is this collection of more than two hundred signed photographs. A selection of these exhibited in the Library Reading Room drew much attention. From Walter Alvarez to George A. Wyeth, medical men of prominence are pictured in formal poses, or more comfortably at ease. Lewis Gregory Cole is at his desk; Paul Ehrlich in his laboratory, Abraham Jacobi in his office. René Sand, Sir Humphrey Davy Rolleston are in uniform, and a young Maude Abbott is in academic gown. Given by Mr. Paul B. Hoeber, Jr., in 1963, this group of photographs is both endearing and important.

#### THE WILKS COLLECTION

Also in 1963 there came to us from Mr. Herbert M. Wilks, through the good offices of the Academy's late president, Dr. Harold Brown Keyes, several objects that have a special appeal for those intrigued by the medical history of Manhattan. A large mortar and pestle, dated 1642, may be seen in the Fellows' Room. More recent and more spectacular are the two large drug jars that catch the eye above the catalog in the Library lobby. These and other apothecary jars and mortars have a special meaning for us, as they were in New York City's oldest retail pharmacy, still in existence at No. 6, The Bowery. There are several manuscripts too. The most interesting to the historian is the pharmacy's prescription book of 1835, presented in 1951. The latest addition, which came early in 1965, is probably the earliest piece in the Wilks Collection, a very heavy and well-worn bronze mortar and pestle, which seems to be 16th-century Spanish. Four inches high, the mortar is decorated with a series of the heads of Medusa between decorative ribs. One very like it is pictured as No. 369 in the *Squibb Ancient Pharmacy* [1940], p. 40.

#### THE BRYCE COLLECTION

In October 1963 came a most unusual small collection assembled by Dr. David A. Bryce in 20 handsome volumes and cases of red morocco. These represent a landmark in medical advertising. From 1946 to 1952, under Dr. Bryce's direction, the *Lederle Medical Bulletin* and a series of brochures were issued by Lederle Laboratories, Pearl River, N. Y. The illustrations in color make these publications a remarkable contribution, and they are supplemented by interesting texts, abstracts, and lengthy bibliographies.

## THE RUFUS COLE COLLECTION

Francesco Redi, 1626-1697, a notable Italian physician, naturalist, and poet, inspired the distinguished collection brought together by Dr. Rufus Cole. As long ago as 1926 in an article on Redi in the *Annals of Medical History*, Dr. Cole wrote, "The significance of Redi lies in the fact that he applied the experimental method in an attempt to discover biological laws." He added, "The organization of the Accademia del Cimento, which is one of the events marking the inauguration of our Age of Experiment, occurred in 1657, five years before the Royal Society received its charter from Charles II, and its foundation undoubtedly stimulated the organization of all the other great scientific societies which have been so important in the cultivation of scientific research and progress." The collection includes many copies and editions of Redi's writings, scientific and literary, in handsome volumes in splendid condition, and 37 manuscript items by or about Redi. The Accademia del Cimento is well represented with first and second editions of the *Saggi* and the English translation of 1684, entitled *Essays of Natural Experiments*. . . . Books by leading scientists of the period are also present—Borelli, Magalotti, Steno, the versatile Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, Vallisneri, Zambeccari. A charming oval portrait of Redi now graces the Malloch Rare Book Room, and there are engravings and medals as well. Historians of medicine and science of the period will find this a welcome treasure whose appeal is also to bookmen and to those with an interest in Italian literature.

## THE JEROME P. WEBSTER COLLECTION OF MANIKINS

A deed of gift was made in June 1964 by Dr. Jerome P. Webster of this fascinating collection. Here art and medicine again meet, for these delicately contrived figurines are exquisite and lovely ornaments. Dr. Webster's collection includes six manikins of European origin, 16th to 18th centuries, for use in anatomical instruction. Four are of the female figure resting on ivory pillows or ebony biers. A pair, male and female, also rest on an ivory pillow. There are 22 Chinese doctor dolls, those charming statuettes that were used by physicians to permit their modest lady patients to point out the affected area on the doll's figure rather than upon their own bodies. These delightful objects will greatly enhance our museum collection.

## THE TREVES BEQUEST

What can be said to describe appropriately this dazzling array of treasures left to us in the will of Dr. Norman E. Treves! December 1964 offered a special Christmas to members of the staff who unwrapped flowery drug jars, gold-glazed, or of Copenhagen blue; feeding bottles, papboats, and spoons in china or silver; silver feeding spoons and other instruments; large jars for leeches, and small gay little eye cups. In all there are 36 pieces of china, 5 of glass, 24 of silver, some of which are American of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Enumerating them cannot convey their high quality or charm.

## THE DENKER MEDICAL STAMP COLLECTION

The stamp collector, knowledgeable in his field, is aware of the beauty, diversity, and range of subjects as well as the important points concerning unusual issues. For the uninitiated, the display of colorful stamps from all parts of the world evokes bewildered astonishment. Dr. Peter G. Denker's truly remarkable collection, housed in six large albums, arrived in December 1964 and January 1965. The variety of subjects of medical interest indicates the importance of health problems everywhere. Portraits of distinguished physicians are to be expected, but there is much concentration on malaria, on child health, and on medicinal plants, in a gay profusion. Many concern tuberculosis control, first aid, nursing, and the Red Cross. Some have to do with cancer, with poliomyelitis, with medical institutions, schools, clinics, hospitals, and with a host of charities. The albums are arranged alphabetically—Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas. Whatever the origin, whatever the subject, the stamps have a wide appeal for all.

## THE SHEHADI COLLECTION

Although Dr. William H. Shehadi's remarkable collection of x-ray tubes was offered to us in 1960, we have as yet been unable to acquire this significant contribution to the history of roentgenology. Housed in four large cabinets, these delicate tubes, exemplifying their development over the years, are too fragile to be moved until a proper display area is available. The urgency of our need for museum space is obvious.

A few paragraphs can give only a brief glimpse of these exciting and valuable additions to our already burgeoning historical library, but they do indicate that if we expect to house more collections, we must be sure to have a proper home for them. Our book collection poses two problems—the lack of convenient space for the rapidly increasing reference tools and histories that must be convenient for readers' use, and the limitations of our small vault for the many scarce and unusual volumes whose value has risen so sharply. Our picture collection and archives have outgrown the small rooms into which they are inconveniently massed, and our splendid museum material has only a basement room remote from the Library or any display area. There are so few historical medical museums that it seems particularly unfortunate that our collection cannot be shown and administered.

The Committee on Plans for Academy Expansion has these needs in mind, and we look hopefully to a future when expanded and appropriate facilities will show off our treasures to advantage, and will attract others. Hippocrates wrote, "In all abundance, there is lack." Our "lack" is of space to hold our abundance.

